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ABSTRACT

This paper recognizes current interest in "the practical," particularly in research on teaching, and it explores similarities or distinctions between underlying conceptions of the practical across several programs, research projects, and scholarly reflections on teaching. Following an introduction, the paper reviews three research programs: Joseph J. Schwab's examination of conceptions of the practical (1978); "(Personal) Practical Knowledge" by Freema Elbaz (1981); and work on practical reasoning by Gary D. Fenstermacher (1986), Jana Noel (1991), Robert Orton (1992), and Shirley Pendlebury (1991). The analysis finds that each has the same general goal: the understanding of what teachers know and how they think rather than how they behave. An examination of conceptions of the practical pays more detailed attention to three specific aspects of research on teaching: content of the practical as the interaction between situational and personal aspects of the teacher and the teaching situation; methods as concepts of deliberation for specific decision making; and various approaches to guiding principles of the practical. A conclusion discusses the similarities and distinctions and argues that conceptions of the practical share some common bases for the research on and discussions of teaching based on these conceptions. (Contains 25 references.) (JB)

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Conceptions of the Practical in Discussions of Teaching: Can There Be a Single Notion?

by

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Conceptions of the Practical in Discussions of Teaching:

Can There Be a Single Notion?

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In the past 15-20 years, discussions of teaching have turned away from how teachers behave in the classroom and toward how teachers think in the classroom, how they develop their knowledge about teaching, and how they can combine their theoretical knowledge with personal experiences to become better teachers. Descriptions of teaching increasingly have emphasized the practical nature of teaching. Correspondingly, the language used to describe teaching increasingly has included the term 'practical' in indicating both the content and purpose of the description. Specifically, many expressions of the practical have been promoted, providing a varied yet common language for discussions of teaching. Examples of such expressions of the practical include the following:

"The Practical" (Schwab, 1978)

"(Personal) Practical Knowledge (Elbaz, 1981; Clandinin and Connelly, 1986-1987)

"Practical Reasoning" (Green, 1976; Fenstermacher, 1986; Noel, 1991; Pendlebury, 1991; Orton, 1992)

"Practical Argument" (Fenstermacher, 1986)

"Practical Theories" (Cornett)

"Practical Epistemology (Schön)

"Practical Wisdom" (Noel, 1990)

Clearly, the practical nature of the teacher and the teaching situation has become a critical component of discussions regarding teaching. Each of the expressions indicates that some notion of the practical is at the heart of the matter.

But, does 'practical' have the same or some different meaning in each of these expressions? Do discussion of teaching that use these distinct expressions proceed under the same conception of practical, as the expressions would seem to indicate? Or does attaching the term practical to other terms give the term a distinct meaning in each case? One possible response could be, who cares? After all, don't those persons involved in the discussion actually have the same purpose in mind, regardless of which expression of the practical they employ -- that is, an improved understanding of teaching? Wouldn't an attempt to discover the meaning(s) of the term practical be an empty linguistic analysis?

I would argue that discussions of teaching should not be unexamined exercises. Rather, they ought to be discussions informed by research. And in fact, many of these expressions of the practical have distinct research programs attached to them specifically. Thus, an analysis of the term practical becomes a deeper examination of the lines of research attached to these expressions of the practical. The question then shifts from what does the term practical mean to what research is done in the name of the practical. Do distinct expressions of the practical lead to distinct research? Do distinct expressions lead to distinct types of knowledge and understanding of teaching? When recognized as a conceptual frame for the way we conduct our research on teaching, the meaning of the practical expression to which we subscribe will affect the questions we ask, the content we examine, the method we use, the principles underlying our approach, and the language we use to describe teachers and teaching. At stake is our way of addressing teaching, what we count as necessary, and our whole approach to studying and discussing teachers and teaching.

The initial question, asked again in this light, is with so many different expressions of the practical in *research* on teaching, can there be a single notion of the practical? And whatever the answer, what are the consequences for future research? Three conclusions may be proposed at this introductory stage. One: these expressions of the practical really do denote the same conception of the practical, and the multiple number of expressions are

but rich, descriptive terms used to make the discussion more interesting. In this response, a single notion of the practical is indicated. The implications of such an explanation for educational research is that researchers recognize the singular nature of the practical, stop fragmenting the field, and work in consort to advance the study of the practical in teaching. Two: the conceptions of the practical signified by these expressions are indeed distinct and signify real differences in conceptions of teaching. In this response, each expression of the practical stands alone in its description of teaching. The implications here for research on teaching would be for researchers to maintain distinct research programs on the practical in teaching, emphasizing and glorifying the unique conceptions of the practical that lie at the heart of their research on teaching. Conclusion number three would be that various research programs share some similarities in their underlying conceptions of the meaning of the practical, while providing some unique contributions to the field of knowledge and understanding. In each of these three proposals, the job of philosophers and researchers of teaching is to understand their purposes, clarify the meanings of the concepts in use, and work independently and together in the effort to improve knowledge and understanding of teaching.

This paper explores the issues introduced here regarding the practical in research on teaching. It examines the meaning(s) of the practical by examining the research programs attached to several of these expressions of the practical. Specifically, it will focus on three of the expressions of the practical and the research programs attached: "the practical," "(personal) practical knowledge," and "practical reasoning." A complete survey of the field of the practical in research on teaching is not undertaken here, only because of reasonable time and page limitations to this paper. After a brief introduction to these three research programs on the practical in teaching, the paper examines more closely the possible similarities or distinctions between the underlying conceptions of the practical in place. As will be seen in the analyses, it is clear that each of these research programs has the same general goal, the understanding of what teachers know and how they think rather than how

they behave. This will be described but then taken as a given. More detailed attention will be paid to three specific aspects of research on teaching: content, method, and guiding principle. The meaning of the practical will be determined through the analysis of these aspects of the research programs. The conclusion will be a discussion of the similarities and distinctions between the meaning(s) of the practical, and the implications of this meaning(s) of the practical on future research on teaching, with the ultimate goal of improved research on teaching.

Introductory Descriptions of the Research Programs

"The Practical"

Schwab's (1978a) description of "The Practical" is a logical starting point for the examination of conceptions of the practical. Schwab described the field of the practical as a whole, in contrast to the field of the theoretic. Following are some of the key points Schwab makes about the practical.

outcome - "a decision, a selection and guide to possible action." (p. 288)

subject matter - "always something taken as concrete and particular and treated as indefinitely subject to circumstance." (p. 289)

problems - "arise from states of affairs in relation to ourselves." (p. 289)

method - "It is deliberative." (p. 318)

other important facets - "generation of alternatives" (p. 315)

Schwab's conception of the practical focuses on the various "arts" used in human action, various arts for helping to generate alternative solutions, to look at the consequences of undertaking these solutions, and finally for choosing among these solutions. His concern is with helping educators, and specifically curriculum developers, to make the best possible decisions as they undertake their planning and actions. His discussions are useful

in laying the boundaries of the practical, and perhaps in opening the recent door to closer examination of the practical within teaching.

"(Personal) Practical Knowledge"

Elbaz (1981) developed the expression practical knowledge to describe the development of a teacher's ability to teach in the classroom. She describes her notion in this way:

> "'practical' aspect...teachers have knowledge, derived from practice, of instructional routines, classroom management, student needs and the like...'personal' aspect, i.e., teachers have self-knowledge and they work toward personally meaningful goals in their teaching...'interaction' aspect, which refers to the fact that teachers' knowledge is based on, and shaped by, a variety of interactions with others in their environment." (p. 47)

Clandinin (1985) and Connelly further develop this conception of the practical, extending it to "personal practical knowledge," but using much of the same language and concepts in their description.

> "What is meant by 'personal" as defining knowledge is that... it is knowledge which has arisen from circumstances, actions and undergoings which themselves had affective content for the person in question...By 'knowledge' in the phrase 'personal practical knowledge' is meant that body of convictions, conscious or unconscious, which have arisen from experience, intimate, social and traditional, and which are expressed in a person's actions."

The line of research on practical knowledge, by Elbaz and Clandinin and Connelly, focuses on knowledge held by practitioners within their professional practices. Researchers in this program of research focus attention on "knowledge as product," studying the knowledge itself, for the purpose of making clear the special knowledge of practitioners. But the discovery of teachers' knowledge is not the only role of practical knowledge. For instance, each of the proponents of practical knowledge discussed here focus on the complex interaction between personal background and teaching environment in describing the general development of a teacher's ability to teach in the classroom. These researchers study such practical aspects of the teacher's actions as how knowledge is developed, how teachers make decisions, the use of this knowledge, the recognition of uncommunicated knowledge, and the bringing to light the teachers' experiences in their own voices.

"Practical Reasoning"

Green, Fenstermacher, Noel, Orton and Pendlebury have examined practical reasoning as a useful approach to studying teacher thinking. This conception of practical reasoning has developed directly out of Aristotle's account of practical reasoning. In Aristotle's account, practical wisdom is "a true and reasoned state or capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man" (Ross, p. 142). In today's practical reasoning research on teaching, practical reasoning is seen as

> "the reasoning process that leads to an action. It is specifically about actions, about ends that can be reached through actions, about the individually selected means to reach those ends, and about the background practices and events within which such acts are situated. It allows for complex situational factors, along with the intentional features of the individual, in the selection of an action." (pp. 278-279)

This Aristotelian-based research program looks at personal aspects of the teacher such as beliefs, desires, emotions, experiences, and intentions. In this approach, teachers base their teaching practice on reasoning through many such personal and situational aspects of the teacher and the teaching situation.

Examining Conceptions of the Practical

In examining similarities and distinctions among these conceptions of the practical, a closer examination of several specific points will help to further the understanding of the conceptions at the heart of these research programs. Examined more closely in what follows is the a) content studied by each research program; b) method, not used to do empirical studies of teaching, but the description of what is needed by the individual teacher in order to act in the practical setting of teaching; and c) guiding principle that underlies the conception of the practical in each of these three research programs.

Content of the Practical

The content of the practical in each of the conceptions of the practical discussed here is the interaction between situational and personal aspects of the teacher and the teaching situation. Included is a wide-ranging look at a broad spectrum of the particular in each situation along with the personal experiences of the teacher. Of greatest importance clearly here is the emphasis on the concrete and particular rather than the universal and general.

Schwab begins the discussion by distinguishing the content of the practical from that of the theoretic. He writes "The subject matter of the practical, on the other hand, is always something taken as concrete and particular and treated as indefinitely susceptible to circumstance." This is a clear focus on the particular, rather than the universal, in teaching situations, a focus shared by those conducting the practical reasoning research. Taken from Aristotle's account of practical reasoning, this research has the conception that "practical wisdom is concerned with the ultimate particular, which is the object not of

scientific knowledge but of perception. Both Wiggins (1975-1976) and Pendlebury (1990) term this "situational apperception."

These conceptions of the practical are concerned with more than the particular within the teaching situation. They also focus on the personal backgrounds of the teachers. Schwab states that practical problems arise from "states of affairs in relation to ourselves." Similar in its focus on the personal, practical reasoning requires the recognition of the teacher's beliefs, desires, emotions, intentions, and experiences in examining the teacher's actions.

These research programs on "the practical" and "practical reasoning" take into account all of the personal aspects and particularities of the situation, and look at the interaction of this situational and personal in practical situations. For example, practical reasoning posits "a conceptual framework in which a person's beliefs, desires, emotions, experiences with particulars, knowledge of universals, and intentions interact in a reasoning process that leads to the conclusion to act" (Noel, in press) And Schwab describes the interaction necessary in the content of the practical in his "natural language of the practical:" it is a "deliberative exchange and consideration among several persons or differing selves about concrete alternatives in relation to particular times and places."

Elbaz' conception of practical knowledge also strongly emphasizes the importance of the personal and situational aspects of teaching. In fact, she emphasizes content more in her discussions of teaching, in part because of her focus on knowledge. In particular, Elbaz discusses five "orientations" of the practical, or "the way that practical knowledge is held in active relation to the world of practice." In these orientations, she includes not only the personal and the situational, but also the social, experiential, and theoretical. Through these orientations, the individual's practical knowledge is shaped through these variety of aspects. a) situational - "knowledge is oriented to the practical situation the teacher encounters; it is formulated in response to these situations;" b) personal - "knowledge is oriented to the self or owner of knowledge...this knowledge is used to express the self, to

give meaning to experience and to realize purposes;" c) experiential - "knowledge is held in the context of the particular experiences through which it was acquired;" d) theoretical - "The way the knower conceives...theory and practice and the relations between them determines both how he acquires and uses practical knowledge;" e) social - knowledge "is shaped by social constraints and is used to structure the social reality of the knower."

And finally, Elbaz further emphasizes the personal, situational, and interaction aspects of teacher knowledge:

> 'practical' aspect...teachers have knowledge, derived from practice, of instructional routines, classroom management, student needs and the like...'personal' aspect, i.e., teachers have self-knowledge and they work toward personally meaningful goals in their teaching...'interaction' aspect, which refers to the fact that teachers' knowledge is based on, and shaped by, a variety of interactions with others in their environment.

Clearly, there is a strong similarity across these research programs in their conception of the content of the practical. Each conception of the practical here invokes the necessity of interaction between the teacher and the complex, but particular, classroom environment. The emphasis is not on development of theoretical, generalizable principles, but rather on the unique situation of individual teacher with individual teaching situation.

Method of the Practical

The method of the practical in both "practical reasoning" and "the practical" involves deliberation for specific decision making. Aristotle states that "it is thought to be a mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well." In Schwab's terms, the method of the practical is "loosely deliberative." His conception of this deliberate decision making comes in the idea that the end of the practical is "a decision, a selection and guide to

possible action." In both of these conceptions of the practical, a specific decision is sought, an intention is to be formed regarding the action to be undertaken.

This discussion of deliberation leads to an extended analysis of deliberation, that of structured deliberation within conceptions of the practical. As most often interpreted, the deliberation of practical reasoning is to be reconstructed in the general form of a syllogism. In this syllogism or practical argument, there is an initial premise expressing a desire and one or more premises expressing beliefs, forming part of "a reasonably coherent chain of reasoning" l ading to the conclusion to undertake a specific action. These premises and conclusion are intended to be propositional statements. While not a static description of practical reasoning, since there are many different sequences and contents included in practical reasoning, this argument form nevertheless provides a general structure for deliberation in a practical situation, again, "a reasonably coherent chain of reasoning."

Schwab, while calling the outcome of the practical a "decision," does not require the structured chain of deliberation toward a decision described in practical reasoning research. For Schwab, practical deliberation is "not at all a linear affair proceeding step-by-step, but rather a complex, fluid, transactional discipline." His focus is on generating alternatives and weighing the consequences of a decision. Following closely the problem-solving requirement that Dewey places on thinking practically, Schwab suggests "trying out" various alternatives determined through deliberation. For example, in developing a curriculum Schwab (1978a) writes that

> The desirability of each alternative must be felt out, 'rehearsed,' by a representative variety of all those who must live with the consequences of a chosen action. And a similar variety must deal with the identification of problems as well as with their solution. (p. 319)

But most importantly, Schwab lays out his "arts" which make up the deliberation process in the practical situation. He suggests several "arts" to be used when making a decision. As he writes

> There are arts for generating alternative possible solutions to the problem, arts for tracing each alternative solution to its probable consequences, arts for weighing and choosing among them. There are also reflexive arts for determining when the deliberation should be terminated and action undertaken.

Clearly, Schwab is concerned with the method of determining the various dimensions of making a decision. And clearly, he recommends the outcome of the practical to be the selection of the actions to take in the classroom. But unlike the Aristotelian account and very similar to the Deweyian account, Schwab does not lay out a step-by-step reasoning process to be undertaken when making a decision.

Elbaz, on the other hand, does not discuss the practical as deliberate decision-making. In fact, she does not discuss decisions as part of practical knowledge. Elbaz writes:

> Schwab (1970) has argued that the practical decision is specific to its situation and cannot be applied in future cases. This may be true enough if we focus narrowly on the outcome of deliberation -- the decision -- but it misleads us with regard to the nature and function of practical knowledge. Such knowledge is not enshrined in the bare decisions which are the outcome of the deliberative process.

And for Elbaz, the practical becomes even less structured. Elbaz includes three aspects of the structure of practical knowledge that make up the method of the practical, and as can be seen, it is not a structured method. First, in a "rule of practice" the individual has

"a brief, clearly formulated statement of what to do or how to do it in a particular situation frequently encountered in practice." Second, "practical principles embody purpose in a deliberate and reflective way." And third, "images" involves "the teacher's feelings, values, needs and beliefs combine as she formulates brief metaphoric statements of how teaching should be and marshals experience, theoretical knowledge, and school folklore to give substance to these areas." But Elbaz does not offer a detailed proposal for a specific structure for these rules, principles, and images and their role as far as decision-making. Rather, they serve more as guides to action.

Several other researchers in the practical knowledge vein similarly either do not propose or plainly oppose the structured deliberation of the practical argument. In fact, researchers such as Schön (1987), Connelly and Clandinin (1986), and Buchmann (1983) propose the importance of another aspect of practical knowledge: Polanyi's "tacit knowledge" (1958). Tacit knowledge is either indescribable, incommunicable, or unknowable. In other words, "we know more than we can tell." Schön suggests that part of the method of the practical in his "knowing-in-action" is being able to bring this tacit knowledge to the surface through reflection. The individual can then criticize or use the new understandings that have developed through this tacit knowledge in their future actions. Elbaz also emphasizes the teacher's tacit knowledge, in her concern for making the teacher's "voice" heard. This focus is further extended through the work of Clandinin and Connelly in their studies of teachers' narratives. Each of these authors emphasizes that teachers' thoughts are not linear, logically organized, or sequenced. Elbaz writes that practical knowledge should not

> "be ordered in terms of the rigorous logic and propositional structure of theoretical knowledge, for example...Rather, we must consider practical knowledge in use, including all the vague and messy tentative formulations, rough generalizations, and segments of formal theory brought to bear in the course of deliberating on a problem.

Margret Buchmann has also described the importance of non-propositional expressions throughout her work on teacher thinking:

> we have no reason to assume that premises that need to be guessed at, terms without clear definition, oblique references, and beliefs that are debatable must be associated with wrong-headed ideas or indefensible lines of action. (quote from Elbaz)

In this perspective, the individual does not deliberate through propositional structures. Rather, non-propositional notions such as metaphor and image are proposed as expressions of practical knowledge. These notions are intended to allow individuals to describe their own experiences in their own terms. In Connelly and Clandinin's terms, individuals get at their practical knowledge through "narrative unity," defined as "a continuum within a person's experience which renders life experience meaningful through the unity they achieve for the person." Other notions used to help articulate practical knowledge include script and routine. And finally, "Other terms which can give us direct insight into teachers' experience are 'rhythm, cycle, habit and ritual' insofar as these terms allow the researcher "to provide an almost physical sense of what the teacher feels, thinks, believes, wants."

Guiding Principle of the Practical

Schwab feels that the theoretic provides inadequate underpinnings for actions in the practical. But he does not ignore theory in his conception of the practical. Schwab proposes special "arts" to deal with bringing theory to practice. In this respect, Schwab describes

> three sets of arts for reconciling the incongruities of theory to practice in attacking the problems of education. There are practical arts concerned with particulars of the practical omitted by theory. There are eclectic arts concerned with the incompleteness of each subject of the behavioral sciences. There are other eclectic arts which select among, adjust, and sometimes combine the incomplete views which constitute the plurality of the theories generated in each behavioral science.

However, although he sees theory as having minimal to no useful application to practice, Schwab does advocate discovering a "principle of enquiry" underlying the practical. In his view, there is a principle of enquiry that does a variety of things for the practical. Specifically, this principle arises directly from practice: "it is necessary that each theory be seen as it arises from the concrete enquiry." Each concrete practical experience may be guided by such a principle of enquiry, with the stipulation that each practical situation may have its own guiding principle. The role of such an individual principle of enquiry is that it

> sets the boundaries of the subject and names the crucial relations, parts, elements, range of properties, array of actions, or related participants which give it its character. Thereby, the principle locates the data to be sought in investigation, indicates the way in which these data are to be interpreted, and determines the form which the resulting knowledge will take on.

Thus while Schwab advocates discovering and disclosing these principles of enquiry out of each practical situation, this "principle (theory) must be selected and adapted to the case." The principle is unique to the individual situation. The guiding principle does

not underlie the practical in general, but rather, arises out of individual cases to guide these unique situations.

In practical knowledge literature, there is no general principle underlying the work on practical knowledge which would go across all practical situations which require human action, except for on the extremely individualistic level. With the emphasis on tacit knowledge, and the unique interaction will develops each individual's practical knowledge, any principle must be individual rather than general. This is evident in the expressed need of the researchers on practical knowledge to recognize that each individual will have her own expressions of her knowledge, whether it be a metaphor, image, statement, or something not communicable. Although not clear, the guiding principle may be the idea that every individual has her own unique voice that can be discovered and/or expressed through the research process.

In practical reasoning, on the other hand, the practical has a guiding principle that serves to underlie decisions about action in the practical situation. Aristotle describes the guiding principle underlying human action as *phronesis*, most commonly translated as practical wisdom. The end of practical wisdom for Aristotle is "good action," action which can be considered to be the good for mankind. Aristotle describes phronesis as an intellectual virtue, as a deliberative state which allows the individual who attains it to be able to ascertain what is good for mankind, and then to deliberate about how best to reach that good. MacIntyre (1988) describes how practical reasoning "involves the capacity to bring the relevant premises concerning goods and virtues to bear on particular situations." In this sense, practical reasoning involves aiming for the highest possible human good in action.

As can be seen, the foundation of an ethical theory is found in the concept of practical reasoning. Practical wisdom is the human faculty that leads not only to reasoned action, but to action considered morally correct in a particular situation. Practical wisdom is a principle which guides thinking and which must grapple with various personal beliefs

and desires when an individual must make a decision in a practical situation, and it is practical wisdom which allows individuals to evaluate the moral aspects of a situation. Practical reasoning expects further analysis and evaluation of alternatives and of goals to determine whether they are morally "right". Practical reasoning is clearly an underlying principle which guides individuals in their practical decision-making in the practical reasoning conception of the practical.

Related to this difference in general guiding principle is the problem solving focus in Schwab, and later in a practical knowledge scholar, Schön. In this Deweyian concept, Schwab and Schön require the discovery of a problem at the start of deliberation. Based on Dewey, the practical is directed only at problems--which are not evident in the general practical situation. Instead, a problem must be found or discovered, only after which time the full deliberation can occur. Practical wisdom, on the other hand, is a principle underlying human action in general. It underlies every practical situation, each time that an individual undertakes an action. This account of the practical sees ordinary, non-problematic actions as appropriate for deliberation. It does not require that a practical situation be seen as a problem to be solved. Rather, practical wisdom is a principle guiding all actions in general.

Conclusion and Further Discussion

Similarities Among Research Programs

Upon examination of the conceptions of the practical in "the practical," "(personal) practical knowledge," and "practical reasoning," it is clear that there are some specific similarities among these research programs on teaching. First and most commonly, the general goal of each of these research programs is the clearer understanding of teaching, specifically, of teacher thinking. In particular, there is an emphasis in the content on an interaction between the personal and the particular in the practical situation. The focus is on the situational in teaching, not on universal, generalizable knowledge about education.

Differences Between Research Programs

Other aspects of the practical are seen in some, but not all, of these research programs on teaching. The practical in the majority of these conceptions involves an action orientation. Schwab discusses the deliberative nature of the practical, that the outcome is a decision and a guide to possible action. Fenstermacher describes the practical argument as a chain of reasoning that leads to an intention to act. The reasoning in this conception suggests active thinking on the part of the teacher. And Noel points out that practical reasoning is actually a process that leads the teacher to select an action. Deliberating, reasoning, selecting an action, and forming an intention to act are all indicative of an active process of thinking by the teacher. In specific comparisons of these three, research on "the practical" leaves ambiguous the actual procedure for selecting an action, "practical reasoning" lays out the actual process of actively reasoning through to making the practical decision, but discussions of practical knowledge by Elbaz and Clandinin spend little time directly addressing the active nature of the teacher's practical decision-making. Their concern is with determining the development of the teacher's knowledge, rather than what is to be done with that knowledge upon teaching. However, Johnson (1984), in his review of Elbaz' work, points out the possibilities of practical knowledge for active thinking on the part of the teacher:

> "Elbaz offers us a 170-page analysis of one...teacher's 'practical knowledge' by means of which that teacher, Sarah, makes sense of her past classroom experience, structures her present interactions with students and faculty, and plans future appropriate actions to novel situations" (p. 465).

This analysis of practical knowledge certainly allows for knowledge to be a key factor in "making sense," "structuring," and "planning." However, the key role of discussions of practical knowledge appear to be in their discussions of how that knowledge is formed,

through personal and professional experiences and their interactions, not in how structured deliberation occurs in teaching.

Similarly, the presence of a general, underlying guiding principle in current discussions of the practical is very different in each of these research programs on teaching. In Schwab's "the practical," guiding principles arise only out of each individual situation. The theoretic is secondary to the practical arts used to decide on actions in each specific situation. In the practical knowledge literature, there is no discussion of an underlying principle to guide the research. Rather, there is the focus on the individualistic, unique voice of each participating teacher. Practical reasoning, on the other hand, offers a guiding principle underlying human action in general, including the actions of teaching. Aristotle's conception of phronesis is crucial to recognizing teachers as actors in a moral situation. It provides the framework for studying teachers as individuals who deal with moral situations on a daily basis. It does not tell teachers how they should act, but rather states that teachers should reflect upon their beliefs, desires, goals, emotions, knowledge, experiences, and intentions when making a decision of how to act. This is a principle that applies to all teachers, and it is a framework which can be used to examine these individual intentional components and to guide the chain of reasoning toward the conclusion.

Unique Strengths of Each Conception of the Practical

The early discussions of the practical by Schwab are clearly useful in laying the boundaries of the practical as compared with the theoretic. They cover many aspects of the practical in teaching, providing guidance in examining each area of teaching.

Discussions of practical knowledge and personal practical knowledge provide much useful information on how teachers' knowledge is formed and developed. These discussions can serve as backgrounds to discussions on how that knowledge is used in the classroom.

And as mentioned above, discussions of practical reasoning provide the description of the active reasoning process that can lead to a decision to select a particular action in a particular teaching situation. The emphasis is on active reasoning, and thus it provides an alternative to the descriptions of the practical which describe the teacher's knowledge, without emphasis how that knowledge is used in making decisions.

Conclusion

It appears that these conceptions of the practical share some common bases for the research on and discussions of teaching based on these conceptions. On a cursory glance, it would seem to be appropriate to claim only a single notion of the practical from each of these discussions. However, each conception of the practical discussed here has provided unique distinctions in the examination of teaching, each important to the full analysis of teaching in the practical realm. Such distinctions, though fine, are crucial to the full understanding of the practical nature of teaching.

Perhaps future examinations of the practical for research on teaching will provide a new combined conception of the practical, one which will draw from the features of each of the numerous discussions of the practical. Such an undertaking would provide a coherent framework of the practical for use in the study of teaching.

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